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Ex-Gestapo Official in Lyons Is Linked to U.S. Intelligence

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

With the return of Klaus Barbie to France to face charges for murders in wartime France, new questions have been raised about the movements of the onetime Gestapo chief of Lyons since the end of the war and about his possible links with American intelligence agencies.

The French are preparing to retry the 69-year-old Mr. Barbie — he has already been sentenced to death in absentia by a postwar military tribunal — and the questions concern the ability of an accused Nazi war criminal to have evaded French justice through apparent ties to the Americans.

In increasingly detailed accounts since Mr. Barbie's extradition Saturday, a Frenchman credited with tracking down the longtime fugitive and a former American intelligence officer have asserted that Mr. Barbie was aided in his post-World War II escape by American authorities.

The accounts maintain that American agents protected Mr. Barbie from French officials and paid him in return for information on other Nazis and for intelligence information from the Soviet zone of occupied Germany.

In Lyons, Klaus Barbie is remembered with fear and anger and the president of the region's Jewish Federation says that every Jewish family in the city suffered at his hands.

The deputy State Department spokesman, Alan Romberg, was asked about the allegations involving Mr. Barbie at the regular news briefing yesterday in Washington, and replied that the department routinely refused comment on intelligence matters. The Central Intelligence Agency, which had not yet been established in the immediate post-war years, referred queries to the Pentagon. Officials there said they were looking into the matter.

Among the questions raised by the new accounts are these:

Where did Mr. Barbie disappear to after the German surrender in 1945? Was he assisted in his efforts to escape? If so, by whom? Did American authorities hide Mr. Barbie and did they block French efforts to bring him to trial?

According to German records, Mr.

Barbie was born on Oct. 25, 1913, in Bad Godesberg, near Bonn. He was a member of the Hitler Youth and joined the SD, the secret service of the SS, the Nazi elite force, in 1935 and the Nazi party in 1937. After the German military drive into Western Europe he served in the Netherlands, and in November 1942 he was made head of the Gestapo Department IV in Lyons.

Charges after the war accused him, among other crimes, of having ordered the death of Resistance fighters, including a top leader, Jean Moulin, and involvement in the arrest of 41 Jewish children who were later sent to the Auschwitz death camp.

After the war American authorities took Mr. Barbie into custody but he later disappeared. In 1971 people who were tracking down Nazis found him in Peru, where he was living under the name Klaus Altmann. He later slipped across the border into Bolivia.

According to Serge Klarsfeld, a Paris lawyer whose father was killed by the Nazis and who with his wife, Beate, was instrumental in finding Mr. Barbie, American intelligence recruited Mr. Barbie before 1948. Later, Mr. Klarsfeld said, it protected the former Nazi from a West German charge that he had stolen jewelry in Kassel, West Germany, in 1946.

French Records Cited

Citing French Government records and his own research and interviews, Mr. Klarsfeld said the Americans had installed Mr. Barbie under several false identities in a commandeered house in Stadtbergen, near Augsburg and Munich.

Testimony in a later trial, Mrs. Klarsfeld wrote in her 1972 book, "Wherever They May Be," indicated that Mr. Barbie had sought information on Rumania for the Americans.

Mr. Klarsfeld, in a telephone interview yesterday from Paris, said his records showed that French security officials met American resistance when they tried to get Mr. Barbie to testify in a war crimes trial in 1948.

A corroborating account came yesterday from a university professor who said he had been an American intelligence agent who had paid and supervised Mr. Barbie in 1948.

The professor, Erhard Dabringhaus of Wayne State University in Detroit,

The 65-year-old Dr. Dabringhaus said he was working as a civilian agent for Army counterintelligence in 1948 when he was ordered to drive to Memmingen, in western Germany, to pick up Mr. Barbie from hiding and take him to a secret house in Augsburg.

The Wayne State professor said he had received a weekly report from Mr. Barbie giving information on other missing Nazis and other data and in return had paid him \$1,700 a month. Dr. Dabringhaus said that later he was commissioned as an Army major and reassigned elsewhere. He said he had never heard from Mr. Barbie again.

Dr. Dabringhaus said one of the most startling bits of information Mr. Barbie had provided concerned a purported uranium mine near Aue in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany that indicated that Soviet scientists might have been working on an atomic bomb.

He said he had known that Mr. Barbie had been an SD officer but had learned of the atrocities he was said to have committed only from one of Mr. Barbie's companions, Kurt Merck.

"I should have arrested him," he said. "But I was told to work with him."